

THE BEACON

FOR SCHOOL AND HOME

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The Secret Window

By Mabel S. Merrill

In Six Chapters

Chapter One

"THERE it is!"

The three young Wynns, perched on the high seat of the old grocery wagon, stared hard as Uncle Robert pointed away through the trees. What they saw was a beautiful big building standing on a low green hill above the river. They had begged their uncle to point it out to them the minute they came in sight of it.

"Oh," breathed Kathleen with a clutch at Blake's arm, "is it really Broad River High School? Think of that building after the log schoolhouse at Lynx Mountain!"

"It looks terribly grand," agreed Jean, the youngest of the three. "I guess you will both be pretty well scared the first day you go up there. Only Blake won't own it."

"You'll have to go along with us," Blake informed her. "Junior High is in the same building. I don't care if I am scared. I'd go through a good deal to get to a school like Broad River. It's the reason I was willing to come and live here when Father and Mother had to go away."

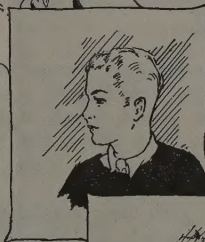
A nudge from Kathleen reminded him that this speech was not quite polite to Uncle Robert who had offered them a home when their parents had to start for Oregon to take care of Grandmother Wynn. But then, Uncle Robert Willis was only their great-uncle and they had not seen him more than a dozen times in their lives. Blake thought it was not to be expected that they should be very glad of a chance to come and live with him.

Uncle Robert was not paying much attention to their talk. He seemed to have forgotten they were with him as the old horse jogged slowly up the street. So they sat quiet and wondered what their new home would be like. Kathleen secretly hoped that none of their future schoolmates had seen them riding on this

Introducing



Jean



Blake



Kathleen

rattly old grocery wagon. Was Uncle Robert too poor to have a car or a motor truck?

Then she felt ashamed of her discontented thoughts. "If he is poor it is all the nicer of him to take in three strays like us," she said to herself.

The old horse went plodding on and presently turned down a short street with stores and warehouses on either side. A sign on an old building at the corner read "Dunn Street." Yes, this was the place, and it was not at all a pretty one. Most of the houses were old and dark. There was one fine residence set back under big elms with a green lawn about it. Kathleen had a hope that this would prove to be Uncle Robert's house. But no! He drove down the other side of the street and stopped before a building directly opposite the handsome place.

The three young Wynns had been liv-

ing in a rough little backwoods settlement on Lynx Mountain where their father had been a clerk for a lumber company. So they were not going to be what Blake called "fussy," but even Blake looked dismayed at he glanced at the place where they had stopped.

It was a big dingy wooden building formerly used for a warehouse but now turned into a tenement. At least, the first floor was occupied by Uncle Robert's general store, a big untidy place, with windows piled full of odds and ends. On the second floor was a boarding-house kept by Mrs. Sibley; it said so in great black letters across the front. A door at one end of the building stood open, showing a flight of stairs leading to the upper regions.

"By the looks of those stairs," said Blake in a low voice, as Uncle Robert started to get the trunks out at the back of the wagon, "Mrs. Sibley's boarders don't bother to scrub their feet on the mat when they come in from the street."

Then he hopped down over the wheel and lent a hand with the luggage so briskly that it was soon vanishing up those badly-soiled stairs. Kathleen and Jean followed silently and in a few moments they were standing in the most dismal room they had ever seen.

It had been intended for a kitchen and was at the back of the building in a sort of addition that was reached by a dark passage. The room had only one window at the end and that was darkened by the wall of another building that stood close up.

"This will have to do for a sitting-room and study for you young ones," explained Uncle Robert. "Mrs. Sibley has all the other rooms on this floor. Your bedrooms are in the attic next to mine."

Then, as they stood gazing blankly around, he went on: "You can have your meals with Mrs. Sibley unless you girls take a notion to do a bit of cooking for yourselves. You see there's a good cook-stove, and there is running water in the sink in that pantry. I used to get my own meals here but it took so much time that I eat in the boarding-house these days. Come on out now and we'll have supper."

They followed Uncle Robert through that dark passage again and down a corridor to the dining-room. Mrs. Sibley paused to shake hands with the newcomers when Uncle Robert introduced them to her. She looked kindly at them, but she was hot and tired and very busy. The boarders were streaming in from the street, up those dirty stairs, and the waiter-girls were flying about in all directions.

When they had finished and were back in their dismal living-room, they sat down on their unopened suitcases and looked at each other.

"Can we stand it?" asked Kathleen in a low voice, "even for the sake of entering Broad River High School? I feel as if I couldn't breathe in this dark, smothery place."

"Let's call it the Den," proposed Blake. "Never was a name more suitable. Say, I'm hungrier on the whole than I was when I went out to supper. Wonder what Mother would say to such cooking as that!"

"Uncle Robert must be hungry all the time," mused Jean. "I guess that's why he doesn't talk more."

Blake looked at his sisters, then suddenly he began to whistle. In a minute Kathleen chimed in and Jean piped up, so that it sounded like a roomful of birds. The Wynns were born whistlers and this was what they always did in time of trouble.

Uncle Robert was in his own room when they came upstairs to bed. He stepped across the passage to ask in a worried way if Mrs. Sibley had fixed their rooms properly and if there was anything he could do for them. But they assured him quickly that they were all right.

Jean, who had found a window at the end of the corridor, was looking down into the dimly-lighted street. She slipped her hand into Uncle Robert's and drew him to where she stood.

"Tell us who lives in this pretty house right across the street," she begged. "I noticed what a nice place it was when we drove down here. See, they're having a party or something."

The lawn at that one fine house they had noticed was gay with colored lanterns and they could see boys and girls playing games or walking about. One girl in a white dress seemed to be everywhere at once.

"That's Ella Glidden," Uncle Robert told them. "I heard Harvey say she was going to have a birthday party tonight. Harvey is her brother, and they will both be schoolmates of you two older ones. Their father owns the paper box factory at the end of the street."

"I wish she would invite us to some of her parties," cried Jean. "I'd like to see that pretty place, near to. Let's remem-



"Uncle Robert was not paying much attention to their talk."

ber their names; Ella Glidden and Harvey."

School opened next morning and for a few days they were in such a whirl that they had no time to think of their dismal "Den." Jean asked the two older ones every day if they had met Ella and Harvey Glidden yet.

They are such near neighbors and it would be so nice to get acquainted," she said.

"Well, I've sized up Harvey," announced Blake one night. "He is the kind of chap who wants to be first in everything and can't bear the sight of any fellow who gets ahead of him. He will never invite me to any of his parties. I work out algebra problems on the board after he has failed and today I beat him in a race out on the track. Besides, they picked me instead of him for football practice when they were trying out the freshmen."

Kathleen spoke slowly. "I don't want to begin saying things about classmates, but Ella Glidden is a flaw-picker. She is as curious as a magpie and wants to get acquainted with people so she can make sure they haven't as pretty dresses nor as nice a place to live as she has."

Jean's face had grown long as she listened. "Then they're both horrid and we can never have any fun with them? Well, of course there will be some nice chums when we have time to pick them out."

Saturday came and then they could pause to take breath and think what they could do to brighten up their dismal quarters. One thing Kathleen did was to get up early and make a bright fire in that big cookstove. When Blake and Jean came down they found an inviting

little breakfast table spread with a white cloth. Kathleen had made muffins and a pitcher full of frothy chocolate. A platter of ham and eggs, nicely cooked, stood on the stove shelf.

"I'm going to do it as many mornings as I have time," said the girl. "Some mornings we shall just have to fall back on Mrs. Sibley but not if I get up early enough."

"Hurrah," shouted Blake. "That means we sha'n't starve any more. We ought to ask Uncle Robert to come and eat with us."

"I've asked him for luncheon. He was just starting off when I went down to the store to get what supplies I wanted."

As soon as they finished their meal, they looked once more around their dark room. "It wouldn't be so bad if we could let some daylight into it," remarked Blake. "Well, that's just what we can't do."

"But we can paste up those strips of paper that are hanging off the wall," urged Kathleen.

They went at it with a will. A whole breadth of the faded old paper was peeling off and when they started to put it back they made a great discovery.

(To be continued)

March

By M. LOUISE C. HASTINGS

Robin's laughter,
And a coat of blue,
Skunk cabbage growing,—
I'm sure it's true
That March has wakened
From sleep. Oh, see!
Those redwings are shouting
Their "O-ka-lee!"

Marbles

By RAELENE NEWELL WHITE

Quite early, on the first warm day,
My marbles rattle in their bag,
And then I cannot let them stay
Imprisoned in the dark,
For I am sure they want to play
With other marbles in the park.
In winter all the boys play tag,
Or skate or slide down hill,
But in the spring-time nothing will
Content us but a patch of ground
Where marbles make a clinking sound.
When Daddy sings or takes a nap
And Mother reads her book,
I pour my marbles in my lap
And count them all, and look
To see if one is lost,
Or figure out how much they cost.
I name them from their colors, and
Golden-brown's my favorite one.
I like to feel it in my hand,
It's full of sparkles in the sun.

United States Army Surgeon and the Condor

By Frances Margaret Fox

MORE than fifty years ago, an army surgeon,¹ whose title was General, sailed away to South America on business for the United States Government. His mission required his presence in Bogota. For diplomatic reasons his errand was known only to those concerned. Diplomats never tell secrets. But a story of the American gentleman's kindness in Bogota, has never been forgotten.

As he was wandering about the city one day he saw a huge bird in sad need of a doctor. The bird was a captive condor. A chain fastened around one of the condor's legs held him to a stake which was driven far into the ground. Even so the captive had much liberty and freedom of motion.

"The sight of that condor made a great impression on me," said the doctor, in describing his patient long afterward when he was at home again in the United States. "It was about seven feet in length, and the distance between the tips of its wings when outspread was about sixteen feet. It stood nearly three feet high. Its talons were as long as my fingers. Its eyes were large as pigeons' eggs and blazed with a light which no captivity could subdue."

The bird was well-cared for and lived in comfortable surroundings. He had plenty of food, water, air and sunshine. The great reason why the condor made such an impression on the American General's mind, was because the poor bird was suffering from a frightfully sore leg and was doomed to die soon in great agony unless something was done to save him.

The doctor could see that one of its legs had been attacked by a terrible insect of South America. This insect burrows in the flesh of human beings and animals, and there it multiplies until, unless help arrives in time, it kills its victims. Uncle Sam's good doctor pitied the great bird. He insisted that something must be done to relieve the suffering of the helpless condor.

He learned that the owner of the condor had captured it when it was young. He was distressed about the condition of

his pet but believed that nothing could be done for him. Uncle Sam's doctor offered to cure the bird. He said he could do it. The owner laughed at the idea.

"Why, sir," said he, "you dare not go near him. He has killed three dogs!"

Our army surgeon, the General, answered that he would take the risk of being hurt by the bird, but cure him he must. It was his duty to relieve suffering.

The owner of the condor loved his pet, but he had no faith in our doctor. "If you can cure the bird you may have him," he promised, "and you may take him home with you to your own country."

In telling the story the doctor explained that the way he handled his unruly patient was like this:

"I went into the forest and cut a strong, withy sapling. From the sapling I made a yoke such as is used to put over the necks of geese to keep them from getting through fences. This yoke I succeeded in putting over the condor's neck. The condor was thus unable to use his formidable beak, although he tried hard to do so. Two men held his sound leg while I doctored the diseased one. The treatment I adopted was to bandage the condor's leg in cotton soaked in oil. Three days later I paid another visit to the condor. This time I cauterized the wounds and the result was that the leg became completely cured."

The General wished to bring Uncle Sam's bird home with him to the United States, because, as he explains, "He was one of the finest specimens of the great South American condor which has ever been taken captive."

But when the General learned that the cost of transporting the bird would be enormous, and that the services of thirty natives would be required to carry the condor from Bogota to the coast, he decided to leave his grateful patient with his old friends in his native land.

That condor of Uncle Sam's, down there in South America, really should have been taught to whistle "Three cheers for the Red, White, and Blue!"

¹ The surgeon was General Daniel E. Van Sickle.



Springtime is Swingtime

By CORA MAY PREBLE

Oh, springtime when it's singtime,
Sing heigh-ho and a heigh-ho!
For springtime, too, is swingtime —
Swing high-low and a high-low!

I like to play my swing has wings
And carries me up high,
Where there are clouds and magic things
A-sailing in the sky.

And sometimes it's an aeroplane
Its wings of gold to try
Away off down the dewy lane.
Or else a butterfly

Of magic size and power, too,
Can take me anywhere —
Away up in the sky of blue,
Or elfin bower fair.

Oh, springtime when it's swingtime,
I just pretend, you see!
For springtime, then, is singtime,
and WINGtime, too, to me!

What We Find in Nature's Treasure Box

By EMMA FLORENCE BUSH

SCIENCE teaches us that for thousands and thousands of years, Old Mother Nature has been busily working away to make the earth what it is today. Many of the strange and wonderful things she made have long ago passed away, because she learned how to make something better, and were it not for the wonderful treasure box she has

prepared we should know nothing about them today.

When Mother puts things away in a box she puts them in carefully, layer upon layer, and when she does this she is only imitating Old Mother Nature herself.

When Mother's box is unpacked we begin at the top, take out the last things she put in, and go on and on down and down until we empty the box.

Just this way men who have studied

Old Mother Nature's work for years and years have unpacked her Treasure Box a layer at a time.

As they have dug down into the richer layers of earth they have learned the secret of what Nature has been doing all these years, and what strange treasures they have found — animals, — birds, — fishes — even insects embedded in solid rock which was once mud, and so preserved for us to see. Beautiful ferns,

(Continued on page 96)

THE BEACON CLUB

The Editor's Post Box

Writing a letter for this corner makes you a member of the Club. Address, The Beacon Club, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

CENTRE ST.,
SEGREGANSET, MASS.

Dear Editor: I would very much like to join the Beacon Club and wear its pin. I go to the Unitarian Church in Dighton and our minister's name is Rev. George L. Thompson. We have a Sunday school with 52 members and last year had an average attendance of 95 per cent. I'm nearly thirteen years of age and would enjoy corresponding with other club members of my age.

Sincerely yours,

EDITH PERRY.

17 COTTON ST.,
LEOMINSTER, MASS.

Dear Editor: Although I have quite a few pen friends I can never have enough. I am fifteen years old and I go to the Unitarian Church. I would like some girls of my age to write to me.

Your sincere friend,

ROSAMOND COOK.

43 BANCROFT PARK,
HOPEDALE, MASS.

Dear Editor: I am a boy eleven years old and I live in Hopedale. I attend the Unitarian Sunday school in our town regularly every Sunday. I enjoy reading *The Beacon* and I would like to become a member of the Beacon Club. Rev. J. B. Tegarden is the pastor of our church.

Yours truly,

HUBERT TURNER.

7 PARK ST.,
HOULTON, ME.

Dear Editor: I would like very much to belong to the Club. I like to read the stories and do the puzzles. I am twelve and am in the seventh grade. Our minister is Mr. MacKay. I would like to correspond with someone.

Sincerely yours,

RICHARD WARD.

610 MICHIGAN AVE.,
EVANSTON, ILL.

Dear Editor: I am very anxious to join your club and wear its pin. I am ten years old and in the fifth grade at school. I go to the Unitarian Sunday school of Evanston. Our minister's name is Rev. Mr. Bragg. My Sunday-school teacher's name is Mrs. Polzin. In our Sunday school we get *The Beacon*, which I enjoy

OUR PURPOSE: Helpfulness.
OUR MOTTO: Let your light shine.
OUR BADGE: The Beacon Club Button.

very much. I like best of all the Editor's Post Box and the Puzzlers. I would like someone of my age to correspond with me.

Yours truly,

ELIZABETH RYAN.

Winter Days

By JANET BOYLE (AGE 11)

Have you the slightest fear
Of the cold, cold days that are very near?
Of the bright and sparkling snow
Dancing and hurrying to and fro?

I like to think of those days so cold
When old Jack Frost gets very bold
And freezes lakes and meadows low
That soon a-skating we may go.

Or, waking in the morning light,
To find the ground all covered white,
Then over the fields and far away
With sled and skis we spend the day.

At last we leave the cold wind's blow,
And the day of fun we've had in the snow,
To sit by the fire, so warm and red,
And before we know it we're off to bed.

Reading, Mass.

What We Find in Nature's Treasure Box

(Continued from page 95)

bones of huge animals, and in some cases the animals themselves, carefully packed away in this wonderful box.

We learn that once reptiles could fly, and that our own beautiful birds with their gay plumage and sweet songs came from these ugly crawling things, with web-like wings. We learn that our beautiful horses, one of the most graceful of our animals, were once little animals no bigger than a fox, with five toes on their front feet and three toes on their hind feet.

Old Mother Nature has packed away the story for us to read of everything from the creatures that once crawled lazily over the bottom of the sea — where scientists say that life began — through many strange, hideous, yet wonderful shapes, down to our own day when we are inclined to think that she has finished her work. But she hasn't, she goes on and on, packing her box with treasures ever new and she will continue to do so until the end of time.

Puzzlers

Flower Puzzle

Guess the name of a flower which is composed of three parts meaning To Endeavor, An Exclamation, and To Allow. Then analyze the name of this flower and find words meaning —

1. To work.
2. Something used for roofing.
3. Something to be worn over the face.
4. To fasten.
5. Piece of land.
6. To choose by ballot.
7. Dress material.
8. Kind of moth.
9. To be fond of.
10. An untruth.
11. Part of the foot.
12. A preposition.
13. To have life.

M. L. C. H.

Twisted Countries of South America

1. Zenevulea.
2. Loomacbi.
3. Geanarnti.
4. Ralibz.
5. Uayurug.

JEAN PETTINGILL.

Answers to Puzzles in No. 21

Enigma. — "Let your light shine."

A Geography Puzzle. — Uruguay.

Nevada.
Italy.
Thames.
Amazon.
Richmond.
Ithaca.
Augusta.
Nashville.

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